

Message Text

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ORIGIN AF-10

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY LAGOS

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EGEN, US, NI

SUBJECT: NUSTED

SUMMARY:

1. WE ARE CONCERNED BY THE LACK OF INTEREST SHOWN THUS FAR BY THE NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT IN THE CONCEPT OF A NIGERIAN/US CONFERENCE ON TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (NUSTED). THE LACK OF INTEREST, AND OUR CONSEQUENT INABILITY TO LAY THE GROUNDWORK FOR SUCH A CONFERENCE, MAKES IT INCREASINGLY UNLIKELY THAT WE CAN PLAN, ORGANIZE AND STAGE SUCH A CONFERENCE AS EARLY AS OCTOBER/NOVEMBER THIS YEAR. THIS MESSAGE OUTLINES THE RELEVANT FACTORS
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AND REQUESTS THE EMBASSY,S VIEWS. END SUMMARY.

2. WE BELIEVE THE IDEA OF A HIGH LEVEL CONFERENCE IN LAGOS, WHICH BRINGS TOGETHER SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS FROM NIGERIA ANDTHE US AND LEADING REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PRIVATE SECTORS OF BOTH COUNTRIES, HAS CONSIDERABLE MERIT. SUCH A CONFERENCE WOULD MAKE IT POSSIBLE TO

EXAMINE IN DEPTH THE MAJOR PROBLEMS IN US/NIGERIAN ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL RELATIONS AND COULD EFFECTIVELY DRIVE HOME TO THE NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT THE VIEWS OF THE US BUSINESS COMMUNITY. SUCH A CONFERENCE COULD PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR REALISTIC EXPLORATION OF SOME MAJOR

NORTH/SOUTH ISSUES. FINALLY, SUCH A CONFERENCE COULD ENHANCE THE ABILITY OF THE US PRIVATE SECTOR TO MAKE USEFUL CONTACTS WITH THE SENIOR LEVELS OF THE NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT AND CONVERSELY COULD PROVIDE BETTER ACCESS FOR ELEMENTS OF THE US GOVERNMENT TO THE NIGERIAN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS. FOR INSTANCE, IT IS LIKELY THAT SUCH A CONFERENCE WOULD IMPROVE OUR ABILITY TO PROMOTE REIMBURSABLE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS IN NIGERIA.

3. HOWEVER, SUCH A CONFERENCE MUST BE CAREFULLY PLANNED WELL IN ADVANCE BY REPRESENTATIVES OF THE TWO GOVERNMENTS AND LEADING INSTITUTIONS IN THE US AND NIGERIAN PRIVATE SECTORS. THE FAILURE OF ANY ONE OF THESE FOUR ELEMENTS (THE TWO GOVERNMENTS AND THE TWO PRIVATE SECTORS) TO PARTICIPATE IN THE CONFERENCE WOULD SERIOUSLY DAMAGE THE OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE CONFERENCE. THIS WAS DEMONSTRATED BY THE LAST MINUTE WITHDRAWAL OF NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT PARTICIPATION FROM THE RECENT BUSINESS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE. WE BELIEVE THE ONLY WAY TO ENSURE THE PARTICIPATION OF ALL FOUR ELEMENTS IS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TO INVOLVE THEM CLOSELY FROM THE BEGINNING IN THE PLANNING PROCESS.

4. TO DATE, THE PRINCIPAL OBSTACLE TO FURTHER PROGRESS HAS BEEN THE LACK OF INTEREST DISPLAYED BY THE NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT, DESPITE THE FACT THAT WE HAVE RAISED IT IN BOTH THE NOVEMBER WORKING GROUP MEETING IN LAGOS AND THE APRIL WORKING GROUP MEETING IN WASHINGTON AND THE FACT THAT WE HAVE OUTLINED OUR VIEWS TO THE NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT IN LAGOS AND IN A NOTE TO MEA TO WHICH WE ARE STILL AWAITING A SUBSTANTIVE REPLY.

5. IN THE MEANTIME, MANY CONTACTS SIMILAR TO THOSE WE BELIEVE WOULD FLOW FROM SUCH A CONFERENCE ARE BEING MADE FOR OTHER REASONS. A DELEGATION FROM THE NIGERIAN/ AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE IN LAGOS HAS JUST COMPLETED A HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL VISIT TO SIX US CITIES. CHIEF OKUBANJO, THE PRESIDENT OF THE LAGOS CHAPTER, PLANS TO VISIT THE US AGAIN IN AUGUST AND TO RETURN A THIRD TIME ACCOMPANIED BY THE OTHER OFFICERS OF THE CHAMBER IN OCTOBER. COLONEL BUHARI, THE COMMISSIONER FOR PETROLEUM, HAS ALSO JUST COMPLETED A VERY USEFUL VISIT

TO THE US IN WHICH HE HELD CONSULTATIONS WITH THE US GOVERNMENT AND US OIL AND GAS COMPANIES. BUSINESS INTERNATIONAL HAS ARRANGED A CONFERENCE IN LAGOS IN WHICH THE PRIVATE PARTICIPATION WAS LARGELY AMERICAN.

WE HAVE HAD TWO SESSIONS OF THE WORKING GROUPS ESTABLISHED AFTER GENERAL OBASANJO'S STATE VISIT LAST OCTOBER. WE THINK IT HIGHLY LIKELY THAT A THIRD SESSION WILL PROVE ADVISABLE BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR, PROBABLY IN LAGOS IN NOVEMBER.

6. IN VIEW OF THE GREATLY INCREASED TEMPO IN US/ NIGERIAN CONTACTS IN THE BUSINESS AND PRIVATE SECTORS; IN VIEW OF THE VERY SHORT TIME REMAINING BETWEEN NOW LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AND THE DATES WE HAD TENTATIVELY SELECTED FOR NUSTED, IN VIEW OF THE CONSIDERABLE TIME AND EFFORT REQUIRED TO PLAN ANYTHING IN NIGERIA, AND GIVEN THE DESIRABILITY OF A LONG LEAD TIME IF WE ARE TO SECURE PARTICIPATION BY LEADING US BUSINESSMEN, WE BELIEVE IT IS ADVISABLE TO START THINKING OF CONFERENCE DATES NO EARLIER THAN THE SECOND QUARTER OF 1979 AND PERHAPS LATER.

7. WE WOULD APPRECIATE THE EMBASSY'S VIEWS ON THE FOREGOING AS SOON AS CONVENIENTLY POSSIBLE. WE WOULD ALSO APPRECIATE THE EMBASSY'S VIEWS ON THE ADVISABILITY OF A VISIT TO LAGOS BY HOLLIS OF THE AID REIMBURSABLE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM STAFF WHICH COULD OCCUR SOMETIME IN EARLY AUGUST. HOLLIS IS PREPARED TO VISIT LAGOS EN ROUTE FROM NAIROBI IF THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THE RESULTS OF SUCH A VISIT WOULD BE USEFUL. IN OUR VIEW, SUCH A VISIT SHOULD TAKE PLACE ONLY IF THE EMBASSY BELIEVES USEFUL RESULTS IN THE SHORT TERM WOULD FLOW FROM HIS CONTACTS WITH EMBASSY OFFICERS, THE NIGERIAN PRIVATE SECTOR, AND THE FMG.

CHRISTOPHER

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